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Uncommon Greatness

by LESTER DE KOSTER

You and I are ordinary people. o monuments will be raised to commemorate our passing this way. No istorian will make mention of us. he world 'will little note nor long remember' what we do or say. We are, ke most of mankind, incorrigibly ordinary.

Before you take offense — if you do - glance back quickly across the years. rom the beginning, to whom did Christianity make its widest appeal? Was it not to the common people, who heard Him gladly"? "Hath any of he rulers or the Pharisees believed n Him?" sneered the 'great' of His ay. Writes Paul, "not many wise men fter the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called." And so it ever as been. For "God hath chosen the eak things of the world to confound he things which are mighty; and the ase things of the world, and things hich are despised, hath God chosen . ." He is talking about us, about you nd me. Do you recognize yourself: olish, weak, base, despised? Yet, *hosen* of God! The "friend of publians and sinners," they said of the Master, publicans and sinners like s, common, ordinary, run-of-the-mill eople — *but, friends* of Jesus! Indeed, o far as worldly success is concerned, Christianity leaves us pretty much as t found us. It does not challenge us o power, or wealth, or fame, or might; what would it profit a man to gain he whole world," said the Master, f it cost him his soul?

Judged by the world's standards — nd I mean the kind we usually use ourselves, too — Jesus was rather a nobody, wasn't He? Anatole France, in his story titled "The Procurator of Judea," imagines an old friend visiting Pontius Pilate, now retired at Rome, and asking him about Jesus of Nazareth. After a silence, Pilate murmurs, "Jesus? Jesus of Nazareth? I cannot call Him to mind." Not so surprising, perhaps, by Pilate's standards of significance. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger, raised in obscurity, so poor he had no place to lay His head and at death no legacy but one seamless robe, Jesus' life was not one which we would have judged significant. Neither foremost in the councils of princes, nor revered in His 'church'; rejected by Herod and Sanhedrin alike; condemned for blasphemy, and crucified for treason, our Lord's earthly life was, by usual standards, uncommonly, tragically common. Those who looked for pomp and glory saw nothing in Him, and the proud and mighty of His day eagerly encompassed His death.

He had spoken a language that few but common folk — touched by faith — could understand. To those who strove mightily to forge ahead, He remarked that the first shall be last; to those who sought to be greatest in His kingdom, He commended childlikeness; the greatest, He said, must become servant of all, and to set an example He washed His servants' feet. The widow with her two mites gave more than they all, He told His puzzled listeners; the man who would pull down his old barns to build bigger, He called a fool. His harshest language was reserved for 'churchmen' who practiced religion for show. All-in-all, it was not the kind of teaching that an up-and-coming young man, bent on honor and power and security, was likely to hear; nor did most of those who had already achieved these things care to hear it.

But to those who did hear, and understood. says St. John, He gave

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Uncommon Greatness — Continued

the power to become the *sons* of God, to enter into a new dimension of worth, to shine as the sun, the moon, and the stars in another realm, for ever and ever. The ordinary people — like you and me -- He called, and calls today, not to enter into *time's* heritage nor to carve their initials deep into the tree of history, but to enter into *eternity's* heritage, here and now, in time and in history. His challenge, His *gift* to us common folk is to *genuine* greatness: "Now," writes John, "are we the children of God"; and, says Paul, "if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." And the challenge of Christianity is to live in a manner commensurate with our calling. "For ye are God's building," says Paul, "God's husbandry, builded for an habitation of God through the Spirit."

Then we say together, you and I: "What! *God* dwelling in *me?* What can that mean? What can it mean now, in my schoolwork? to me in my kitchen? to me at my workbench?"

It means, writes St. Paul, if we accept it in faith, that we become a new creature. But it means also, writes St. James, that our "faith without works is dead." It means, says Paul, that we "put off the old man, putting away lying, bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking." It means, says St. Peter, that we "lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speaking." For there is debris to be cleared away on the site where the new building will rise.

Nor are these abstractions, or generalities. Do we, indeed, who confess each Lord's Day that we sin in thought, word, and deed, have then no specific sins to struggle against? no old man to put away? There is work to be done on God's building-site, work done in prayer and on our knees, in season and out, at home and away!

But there is more than clearing the ground, lest we fit it only for more evil spirits than were there before.

To plain folk, to you and to me, at your books, in your kitchen, at your bench, in your chair, Paul writes, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest . . . just . . . pure . . . lovely . . . of good report . . . if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." And again, "put on, therefore, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another." And, says St. John, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another; God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God." Or again, as Peter puts it — not to someone else, but to you and me, *this* day — "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity."

A formidable list of virtues, you say? Yes, indeed! Our call to genuine greatness exacts no less of us than the world's calls to pseudo-greatness. You would become world-famous, powerful? Then you must give your life to it! So, too, you would become, by God's grace and His gift, a saint? Then, put humanly, you must give your life to that! Not out of the world, but wherever you are. It is hearing the call to sainthood in our homes, in our work, in our leisure, in all that we think and do that constitutes Christianity's challenge to us common folk, in our common ways. It is our call to greatness; it is the only call to greatness that really matters; the call that touches the ordinary with gleam of the divine, and opens to those given grace to hear the doors of the Kingdom of Heaven.

The world needs saints, in the home, in the factory, in business, everywhere, though the world in its wisdom knows not its real need at all. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace." So writes St. James to common people like you and me, called to *uncommon* greatness, for, said the voice to Peter, "What God hath cleansed call not thou common." God grant that such is His judgment, whatever the world's may be, concerning you and concerning me.

The editors of The Reformed Journal take pleasure in announcing the fact that our fellow-editor, the Reverend Harry Boer, upon the completion of his studies at the Free University of Amsterdam, was given the degree of Doctor of Theology cum laude on the basis of a published dissertation entitled, Pentecost and the Missionary Witness of the Church.

—The Staff

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Missions and Unity

by HARRY R. BOER

THERE is in the Church throughout the world today an ecumenical striving of such magnitude, that it is not possible for anyone who takes seriously the confession, "I believe a, holy, catholic Church," to remain indifferent to it. One can, of course, say that it is all a modernistic business, but this assertion is easier made than established. Whether one feels a kinship to the ecumenical movement or not, the movement is here and no serious Christian leadership can afford to act as though it were not here.

The Unity of the Church Only Spiritual?

IT is not the purpose of this article to discuss whether or not the Christian Reformed Church should join the World Council of Churches. I see no good reason why this subject should not be seriously entertained, but that is not now the aim. I wish to discuss a more fundamental question, a question without the discussion of which, it seems to me, there can in the long run be no fruitful approach to ecumenical questions. This question is: Is the unity of the Church which the Bible teaches only, or primarily, a spiritual unity? Is it not also an external, a visibly communal unity? And is this *visible* unity not *just as much* a requirement of faith and action as spiritual unity?

There has taken place since the Reformation such an unholy and far-reaching splintering of the Church of Christ, that the magnitude of this derailment is by many no longer even felt. It has become the accepted thing. This fact, that for many the brokenness of the Church has come to be an accepted and a normal situation, is perhaps even more an indictment of the Church than the fact of her brokenness. It means that so long as the sin of brokenness is not acknowledged as sin, there will be no repentance, no praying or seeking for the restoration of lost unity.

All hands are aware, of course, that the Bible teaches and that the Apostles' Creed confesses the unity of the Church. Every Sunday we say, "I believe a holy, catholic Church." Our theology has made it possible to do this, week in, week out, year in year out, century in and century out, without an awareness of incongruity in the face of the fact that the Church is in fact *not* one. Our theology has made it possible for us to do this because the teachers of the Church have said: the real thing in the unity of the Church is its *spiritual* unity. In Christ we are all one. In Christ the Church is one. This unity is now hidden, one day it will appear in all its glory. Meanwhile, the visible disunity of the Church is unfortunate, but this need not alarm us unduly because it is in the spiritual realm that we must seek the true unity of the Church. In this way we have made it possible for Reformed, and Presbyterians, and Methodists, and Baptists, and who not more, to maintain, without a sense of self-contradiction, their *many churches* while weekly confessing the *one Church.*

Missions and Unity

THE chief interest of this writer in the life of the Church and in the study of theology is a *missionary* interest. I wish, therefore, to view the unity of the Church in this article from a missionary point of view. Perhaps the reader will feel that this point of view, while doubtless interesting, need not be too seriously entertained. After all, Amsterdam and Evanston lie far from Africa and India and China. The decisive voices at these meetings were the voices of Barth, Niebuhr, Hromadka, Visser't Hooft, Berggrav and other theologians from the West. And the churches who provide the organization and the money and the leadership in the ecumenical movement are, by and large, European, British and American churches.

The reader who so responds to thoughts presented about the unity of the Church from a missionary point of view does no more than reveal thereby his want of historical knowledge. For it is simply a matter of historical fact that ecumenical striving did *not* arise in the churches of Britain, Europe and America, but on the *mission field,* among missionaries and among the younger churches. That is where the roots of the ecumenical movement lie, and they lie imbedded there *very deeply.*

As early as 1806 William Carey proposed that there should take place at the Cape of Good Hope in the year 1810 the first of regularly to be held decennial international missionary conferences. This meeting would be a "general association of all denominations of Christians from the four quarters of the world." The plan died at birth, but the vision which it kindled continued to burn. During the course of the century meetings and conferences on smaller and larger scale were held, and these flowered in the international missionary conference held at Edinburgh in 1910. In various ways the World Council of Churches grew out of the Edinburgh meeting. The most important of these W. R. Hogg describes as follows,

> Edinburgh brought the younger churches into the thinking orbit of the older churches. It helped to establish them in the Christian world community. It prepared their ablest members for international and interdenominational leadership. That the World Council of Churches was founded as a *world* body resulted primarily from the extension of Edinburgh's influence through four decades. *Ecumenical Foundations,* 1952, p. 141.

From the viewpoint of history alone, therefore, we should be very careful indeed in describing the present ecumenical movement as a child of European, British and American liberalism. Its origins are considerably more complex, and also, I may say, considerably more Christian.

This historical aspect I wished to mention only in passing. May it serve as a caution not to simplify what is complex, and to prevent the presentation of one aspect of a many-sided situation as the whole of that situation. And may it serve above all as a reminder of the fact that the unity of the Church has been an important factor in specifically missionary thinking and action.

The Divided Church and the United Denominations

IT is very characteristic of churches which have little concern for the unity of the world Church to be very concerned about their own unity. When pronouncedly different viewpoints find expression in such denominations there is wide-spread lamenting, and

suggestions are made to "get the parties together," to "patch up the differences," and to restore again "the peace and unity of the church." So long as efforts to gain a common viewpoint do not infringe on rights to hold different viewpoints, they can only be welcomed. The unity of the church is a jewel of great price, just as the freedom that we have in Christ is a jewel of great price. We are all agreed therefore that the unity of the church *is* important, and there is evidence enough to believe that it is a rather universal concern. It may even be said that this unity is so much sought after, that it is not uncommon for churches to sacrifice elements in their life that ought not to be sacrificed in order to retain this unity.

What I find very strange, however, because it is so inconsistent, is that striving for intra-denominational unity can be accompanied by well-nigh total indifference to the unity of the world-Church. How can we put these two phenomena together? It seems very peculiar, too, that when divisions enter into denominational life we do not suggest to the church that these divisions are not so important because, in final analysis, the unity of the church is spiritual, and this unity has not been broken. Do we not, amidst all our differences, fundamental heresies excepted, remain one in Christ? Is not our *spiritual* unity unbroken? Why all this worry about *visible* unity? Why suddenly all this concern to come to *openly manifest unity* of mind? If a split in the denomination threatens to occur, why is every resource exhausted to prevent it? Why are we not *then* content with spiritual unity? Why does visible unity *then* become so important?

The reason for this does not seem far to seek. Then the unity of "our" church is at stake. Then her work, her institutions, her program, her effectiveness and name in the world are threatened with damage. And that touches us, our life, our place in the church, in an immediate way. When this happens visible unity suddenly becomes *very* important. So important, in fact, that sometimes the effort to retain it runs rough-shod over spiritual considerations. When this visible unity is broken we weep because we recognize that something fine, something God-willed and God-given has been lost. That is how seriously we take visible unity when *our own* church life is at stake.

The Churches and the Church

But now I ask: What is this church, this Christian Reformed (or any other) church? What is this church that we call "our" church, about whose visible integrity we are so concerned? This church that we call "our" church is the body of Christ, *she is the universal Church.* She is the *one* holy *catholic* Church. She is not that in her totality of all times and places, but she is that fully, wholly, and completely. Nowhere in all the world will it be possible to find a church that is more essentially a manifestation of the one body of Christ than in this, "our" church. And this must be said of every church body that confesses Christ as Lord and Saviour. There is only *one* Church of Jesus Christ, and this Church comes to manifestation "where'er the sun does his successive journeys run." There are varying degrees of loyalty to Christ and to his word, but in essence every church that confesses the Christ of the scriptures is the Church.

But if this is so, how do we square our deep concern for the unity of "our" church with our *want of concern* for the unity of the Church of Christ, which is what we are?

I have a second question. If we are so concerned about the visible unity of "our" church, and are convinced that this concern is God-willed (as surely it is) how can we suppose that *our Lord* is *not* concerned about the visible unity of *his* church, his church from East to West and from North to South? On what ground do we suppose that he is less concerned about the visible unity of his body than we are about the visible unity our denomination? And if we do believe that the Lord has the same concern (in his perfect way) for the visible unity of the Church that we have (in our imperfect way) for the visible unity of the denomination, why do we invent and maintain the theological fiction about the adequacy of spiritual unity for the world-Church when we don't mean a word of it in our own ecclesiastical house? Is not a little soul-searching in order here?

Unity as a Missionary Instrument

In making the above observations, I did not depart from my intention of discussing the unity of the Church from a missionary point o view, but rather prepared the way of it Why is the Lord so concerned that hi Church should be *one,* outwardly a well as inwardly? Why can he not b satisfied with *many churches* when h has made us members and beneficiarie of *one* body, *one* Spirit, *one* hope o our calling, *one* Lord, *one* faith, *on* baptism, *one* God and Father of all Eph. 4:4-6? There are various reason for this. I wish to emphasize in thi connection one of these reasons. Thi reason is that Christ as the Sent On of the Father is the great *Missionary* who is bent on *the completion of hi body.* He wants one Church, visibly and spiritually one body, *because th unity of the Church is a potent mis sionary weapon.*

When Jesus prayed his beautifu high-priestly prayer (John 17) he sai in the course of it, "And the glor which thou hast given me I have give unto them; that they may be one, eve as we are one; I in them and thou i me, that they may be perfected into one that the world may know that thou dids send me, and lovedst them, even as tho lovedst me."

This important passage is seldo treated as a unity. Liberals just love t lift out of it the words "that they ma be one," and emblazon them on th banner of willy-nilly church unio forces. The theologians who have littl heart for the visible unity of the churc are a bit embarrassed by them, there fore they do not do much with them and when they do treat these word they are made to refer primarily (o course) to "spiritual unity." The forme are wrong and the latter are considerabl less-than-right.

In the verses above quoted Jesu expresses two purposes: 1. He has give his glory to the Church that she ma be one, and 2. This unity exists i order that "the world may know th thou didst send me, and lovedst them even as thou lovedst me." About th glory of Christ that brings the uni of the Church into being little is ev said, but it is obviously the basis all that follows. In a later article hope to suggest a few thoughts on th very important conception.

Here we are particularly interest in the following question: Why d the Lord bring the unity of the Chur into being? Why has he given h glory to the Church in order that h unity may be effected? The answ is obvious. It is *that the world m*

come to acknowledge him. The world, the sinful, spiritually undiscerning world, the world that is blind to the things of God, must be brought to acknowledge that Christ is the Sent One of the Father *by beholding the unity of the Church and the love of God which she must manifest.* The spiritually blind world must be persuaded, by the external evidence presented to her natural eyes and feelings, that the message of the Church about her Lord is true. This is done by the expression of the *visible unity* and the *visible fellowship* of the Church as a manifestation of her spiritual unity and spiritual fellowship.

THE world is in a bad way. Broken lives, broken homes, broken societies, broken economies, broken hopes and broken ideals — this is the brokenness in which she lives. Her wound is incurable. Desperately she struggles for unity, for wholeness of life, for integration of the spirit, for peace. But all in vain. Even in moments of highest success a deep voice within her speaks of the swords of disappointment and frustration that hang suspended from a thread above her.

In the midst of this broken humanity Christ has created a new humanity. It is his body, motivated and animated by one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all. This body is the Church, the Church of Jesus Christ. In this body, in this Church the world must find exemplified all that she does not have and desires so deeply. She must *see* these Christians in their Church living the united life of the Spirit of love and wholeness of life. She must *see* this. She must *see* this with her natural eyes and *sense* it with her natural feelings, and so she must be brought to inquire into the source of this united and ordered life of the Christian Church. And, inquiring, she must find the secret — Christ, the Sent One of the Father. *That* was Christ's intention when he gave his glory to effect the unity of the Church.

The tragedy of the Church is that when the world considers her life and message as a possible answer to her problem, she finds, so far as the outward eye can judge, the same brokenness that characterizes her own situation. An ameliorating factor is that in areas where the divided Church has long been established the world considers this situation just about as normal as the churches do. The reason for this is that she is herself in large measure a product of the forces that brought a disunited Christianity into being. Moreover, the churches can "afford" to be disunited. Their life is not only not threatened, it is protected by law and tradition. There is a gentlemen's agreement among the churches to disagree, and everybody believes in religious liberty — liberty, apparently, to be free from the requirement of Christ. All this fits in nicely with the doctrine that the unity of the Church is primarily, if not exclusively, spiritual.

ON the mission field the situation is quite different. There, almost invariably, a small group of Christians confront a vast mass of paganism with large cultural, religious, and other traditions. The disadvantage inherent in this situation is compounded by the fact that the divisions of the Western churches have been transmitted to the mission areas. These divisions few understand, even among the Christians, and still fewer have much appreciation for them. Everybody preaches Christ, all confess "I believe one holy catholic Church," but one preaches Christ the Reformed way, another the Lutheran way, another the Baptist way, another the Roman Catholic way, others in still other ways, and not a few in no particular way at all. Is it any wonder that the pagan world is baffled by this formidable array of disunited unity? Is it not natural that all these claims to believing in one Church by missionaries and ministers who belong to many churches that have no communion with each other seem rather absurd to people who do not know one scintilla about our history, let alone the fine points of it? And is it not *marvelous* that our Lord gathers his own notwithstanding our betrayal of the entrusted heritage?

Well, now, this is the reason why the ecumenical movement arose not in the Western churches with their "spiritual unity" doctrine, but on the mission field where this doctrine is, somehow or other, less than compelling. It is a doctrine that stands in the way of the witness. It is not objected to because it is part of the offense of the Cross, but because it frustrates what the Cross of Christ intended to achieve, and will achieve in spite of it. It is not an accidental matter that the tremendous expansion of the Church in the lifetime of the first generations of Christians was effected by *one, undivided Church.* The New Testament knows *nothing* of two or more churches, both of which truly confess Christ, but are not in external communion with each other. It knows only *one* Church, one in her spiritual life, one in her manifestation to the world. *This* is the guide, *this* is the standard for our theological and ecclesiastical thinking. None other.

We may not be able to achieve now or at any time a truly large manifestation of the visible unity of the Church desired and commanded by our Lord. But unquestionably we must *endeavor* to achieve it. This article is not a plea for doctrinal indifferentism. It *is* a plea for two other things. It is a plea for the elimination of the doctrine that the unity of the Church is exclusively or primarily spiritual. It is also a plea for the recognition of the fact that we are all members of one body, the one body of Christ. And because we are this we should acknowledge, irrespective of our own doctrinal integrity, our solidarity in guilt for the divisions in that body. And we should do this with *missionary concern.* For the divisions in the body stand in the way of the completion of that body on the mission field around the corner, and on the mission fields at the uttermost ends of the earth.

I shall close with a quotation from Herman Bavinck:

> . . . .It cannot be denied that the endless divisions of the confessors of Christ have given occasion to the world for joy and mockery, and have presented her with a reason not to believe in the Sent One of the Father, because she does not see the unity of the believers in Christ, John 17:21. As Christians we cannot sufficiently humble ourselves over the schism and dissension that have through all the centuries existed in the Church of Christ; they are a sin against God, in conflict with the prayer of Christ, they are caused by the darkness of our understanding and the lovelessness of our hearts. *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek,* 3rd ed., pp. 343, 344.

It is unfortunate that Bavinck allowed the troubled history of the Church to becloud this good vision, and that it led him to seek refuge in the end in the spiritual unity of the Church, pp. 344-348.

Jesus and the Old Testament — II

by HENRY STOE

IN an article appearing in last month's *Journal* I mentioned that Jesus was completely devoted to the Old Testament Revelation and that he came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it. I further observed that this fulfillment altered the Law's position.

This is reflected in Christ's teaching. There are sayings of his which seem to go beyond the Law. By fulfilling it he seems at times to disallow it. In view of this how can one still maintain his full fidelity to the Scriptures?

* * *

To answer properly we must first distinguish between the written Torah and the Scribal Tradition. Much of what Jesus opposed was in the latter and not in the former. It is true, of course, that the Judaism of Jesus' day ascribed to the oral law a character as binding as that possessed by the written. It, too, was believed to have been revealed to Moses. "The whole revelation of God was not comprised in the Sacred books. By the side of Scripture there had always gone an unwritten tradition, in part interpreting and applying the written Torah, in part supplementing it" (Moore, *Judaism*, I, p. 251). To this supplementary part the Scribes accorded absolute validity. Pirk Aboth even goes so far as to say: "it is more serious to offend against decrees of the Scribes than against the decrees of the Law" (Brenscomb, *Jesus and the Law of Moses*, p. 44). On the other hand, Judaism did differentiate between Torah and Tradition, Canon and Commentary. "When the last prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi died, the Holy Spirit ceased out of Israel" (Ibid., p. 41). And Josephus says: "From Artaxerxes to our own time the complete history has been written but has not been deemed worthy of equal credit with the earlier records because of the failure of the exact succession of the prophets" (*Contra Apionem*, I, 41). Canon and Tradition were, therefore, distinguishable, and it is evident that Jesus did distinguish between them. There is no evidence, however, that he regarded the Tradition as in itself reprehensible. With much of it he was in apparent agreement. He "would not suffer that any man should carry a vessel through the temple" (Mk. 11:16). He observed the rules for celebrating the passover (Mk. 14:22, 26). He seems to have worn the fringed garment prescribed for every good Jew (Mk. 6:56). But, and this is the significant thing, he did not regard the Tradition as apriorily binding. It was not inviolable, as the Scriptures were. For that reason he could oppose it on occasion in the name of Scripture. The Scribes were the objects of his scorn because they exactly reversed the true relation, leaving the commandments of God and holding fast to the tradition of men (Mk. 7:8). Many of these traditions Jesus believed to have no Scriptural warrant and to be subversive of man's best interests. For that reason he was careless about the frequent cleansings and fastings, opposed the ceremonial washing of cups before eating, and inveighed against a fettering legalism that tithed mint and cummin and neglected he weightier matters of the law. Human tradition no less than human intuition had to bow before the revelation of God in the canonical Scriptures.

* * *

But, it will be said, did not Jesus retouch the Old Testament itself so as really to change its complexion? Did he not inwardize and spiritualize its ethics? Did he not introduce a comparative principle by the application of which one Scriptural precept was rejected in the interest of another?

That Jesus interpreted the Torah differently than his contemporaries cannot be denied. Therein, among other things, lay his originality. He was the great interpreter, and his followers can never properly read the Old Testament save through his eyes. From him we know what the law against murder really means (Mt. 5:21), and how strictly the prohibition of adultery must be taken (Mt. 5:27). He lay bare the very heart of the whole law, summing it up in Love (Mk. 12:28-34; Lk. 10:25-28). He provided us with a new perspective, teaching us that the Law is meaningful only in the measure that it transforms itself into an inner witness. Where the Scribes had enjoined obedience to an abstract Law, he enjoined obedience to God *through* the law. He made plain that trust in God is the active principl of all goodness, and insisted that th moral quality of an act is largely de termined by the intention that lies be hind it. In all this he far transcend the Judaism of his day and casts a new full light upon the Scriptures.

It is evident, however, that in th class of passages here referred to, Jesu strengthens the Law rather than weak ens it. He reveals to us its true scope an meaning. The fact is, he *interprets* it he indicates what God meant the Law t say. By so doing he establishes it. H was here, as elsewhere, the True Light illuminating the Scriptures, dispellin its darkness, making plain its obscuri ties, and casting into bold relief it mountain peaks while preserving it hills and valleys. His discourses are on long answer to the question: What sa the Scriptures? What really do the mean?

* * *

There are a number of passage however, which seem to imperil th thesis we have thus far been maintain ing. These passages suggest that Jesu definitely abrogates certain parts an provisions of the Scriptures. He r places the Scriptural law of reveng with the law of forgiveness and non-r sistance; he controverts Moses on th question of divorce, and forbids swea ing which the Law allows. He fails observe the Mosaic regulations pertai ing to the Sabbath, and permits th eating of forbidden foods. Apart, to from any specific utterance there seem to be in his tone, bearing, and condu a general magisterial indifference to t peculiarly ethnic and ceremonial a pects of Israel's religion. Walk notices that Jesus "wholly subordinat the ceremonial expression of reveren for God to the humanitarian expressi of it" (*Jesus and the Jewish Teachin* p. 306). And Mackinnon is of t opinion that "His attitude toward t ceremonial law practically implies abrogation" (*The Historic Jews*, 325).

How are we to square this importa element in the teaching of Jesus w his fidelity to the Scriptures? The a swer, it seems to me, lies in the qu tion; the problem suggests the soluti It will be noted that it is the "peculi ly ethnic and ceremonial aspects

Israel's religion" that Jesus abrogates. The significance of that fact cannot be overestimated, for it is precisely in respect of their nationalism and ceremonialism that the Old Testament Scriptures *are by their own witness* temporal and provisional. When Jesus attacks them at these points, therefore, he is doing what they themselves anticipate and in a sense demand.

In this light we can understand the utterances referred to above. When Jesus declares that the Law and the Prophets have ceased with John, he is merely announcing the presence of the new era toward which the Law and the Prophets pointed. All prophecy had been concerned with one great far-off divine event. Now it had happened; the Messiah had come. Hence prophecy must cease. As for the Law, the very peremptoriness of its moral imperatives promised a Perfect and Sinless One in whom it would be justified. In its ceremonial aspects the essence of the Law lay in its prospective reference. All its sacrificial lambs pointed to the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world. Now the perfect lamb had come. Hence the Law too must cease. This does not mean that the Law and the Prophets are broken and discarded; it means simply that they are completely vindicated.

In Israel Church and State were one; religion and politics were practically identical. This was inevitable in a Theocracy. This peculiar organization was, however, in its very nature provisional. Jewish nationalism existed for a larger end. Abraham was chosen that in him "all the nations of the earth should be blessed" (Gen. 18:18; 22:18). God's special revelation, in the Old Testament, was temporarily confined to this narrow national channel in order that in the fulness of time it might the better irrigate the whole world (Ps. 107:3). What Jesus says in effect when he speaks about Divorce and Sabbath observance, is that they are to be raised out of their socio-political matrix and personalized. He does not condemn the old order; he merely affirms that it is passing away. And in so doing, it must be remembered, he is saying what the Scriptures themselves say. Jesus is here again the great interpreter. He is being true to the Word.

But was there nothing new in his own revelation? Was he merely an expounder of the Old Testament Scriptures? There *was* something new. The new and vital message that Jesus brought was this: not that nationalism and ceremonialism was dispensational, but that their dispensation had *now* come to an end. His unique message was that the universal, spiritual, and unceremonial kingdom, adumbrated in the sacrificial system, implied in God's choice of a special people, and promised by the Prophets, had *now* come. This is the really distinctive element in his teaching. His contribution lay not so much in his ethics; Klausner, Abrahams, Strack-Billerbeck and others have helped us to see that more plainly. His contribution lay not in the rejection of a book-religion; he was throughout loyal to the Scriptural word. His contribution lay in the announcement of the kingdom; his teaching was a setting forth of its rules; his life was a display of its spirit; his death was the seal of its establishment; his resurrection was the sign of its triumph.

Thoughts of a Young Liturgete

by LEWIS B. SMEDES

There must be few experiences of anticipation like that of a young minister looking to his first performance in public worship. If he has considered his calling well, he realizes that he will never again do anything more important than leading the Body of Christ in her worship of God. Be it in a log-cabin chapel or in a great cathedral, be it with a congregation of five hundred or a congregation of fifty, this is the quintessence of his ministerial life. For in worship he officially and liturgically leads the people into the Holy of Holies where he speaks to God with them and speaks for God to them.

He knows that if he is to perform this high function responsibly before God, he must know what he is doing. He must know a good deal more than the "correct" thing to say at the correct moment. More is demanded of him, he realizes, than platform poise and a pleasant voice. He must understand the purpose of each liturgical act. He must understand it in its relationship to the whole service. Everything he does must have liturgical sense. And the sense must be defined by his theology. He must understand and feel the sense, and be able to give a responsible accounting of it to others. Only then, as Abraham Kuyper has taught him, will he really be a liturgete.

Our newly ordained man has thought about these things. He wants to be a liturgete in the true and responsible sense. Well before the time comes, he studies the printed form provided by his own church. He takes it in hand and gives it earnest thought. He first notes the words above the printed service: *Form of Worship.* That is right. Worship is given a form. *All* of it is done with and in form. Worship is not only clothed in form; it is incarnated in form. We have our treasures in earthen vessels. He has heard a great deal about "formalism" and its dangers. But he knows that "formalism" is not a matter of having too much form. It is the investing of the forms themselves with religious significance. It is like investing the human form of the Saviour with religious significance without the faith that the human form is the incarnation of the divine Word. The problem of form in worship is not one of giving the act of the spirit too much or too little form. It is one of the *appropriate* form for the spiritual act, as well as one of the proper understanding of the symbolical function of forms. It is a problem of fitting the form to the spiritual act of worship.

The newly installed minister understands this, and proceeds to study the service. The sermon, he notes, is in the center of things. As the pulpit is at the center of the church, so is the sermon at the center of the liturgy. This is as it should be. Revelation, the Word of God, the prophetic voice, is the core of the service. So far so good.

* * *

He looks to the top of the service. There he sees the words: *Votum and Salutation.* Why, he wonders, is

Thoughts of a Young Liturgete — Continued

the Latin word *Votum* injected into an otherwise English service? What is the precise equivalent of the Latin? Happily, he can recall his Latin. But what about the average worshiper who has studied no Latin? Curious, he takes the trouble to call a friendly elder. He asks whether the elder knows what the *Votum* means. The elder knows what the minister says when the *Votum* is called for. But he does not know what the word means. Come to think of it, he does not know exactly what the purpose of the thing is either. The young minister thanks him cordially. He does not want to strain at a gnat at this point. It is the *act* of worship, not the meaning of the term that is important. Still, if the word is obscure to the people, will they be able intelligently to participate in the act? He hopes for the best.

For the *Votum*, he intends to use the words of Psalm 95:6: "Come, let us worship and bow down, let us kneel . . . ." He stops, a trifle embarrassed, "Let us kneel," he will say to the people. But . . . the people will sit. They will not kneel then, nor at any time in the service. They may kneel at home in private prayer. But never in church. They would not remain seated to address a stranger. The men will spring from their seats at dinner when a woman approaches. But before the pure white throne of grace on which is seated the Lord God of heaven and earth, they will sit, comfortably, relaxed, familiarly, at leisure. He recalls that saints of Scripture knelt to pray. He knows that the practice of the Church from the beginning was to kneel at prayer. The early Reformed Church bent the knee to pray. The fathers of Dordt knelt when at prayer in the splendid church of Dordrecht in 1618. But in the Christian Reformed Church we enter the Holy Presence of the Living God in the same posture that we enjoy while watching television. He is a Sovereign God, above all; but He is approached, humbly in heart, proud in posture.

But, of course, there is no room to kneel. The pews are too close together. We make room for many things. Many of our new church buildings provide for spacious cloak rooms. The lavatories are commodious. The consistory room is little short of elegant. But a little extra room in the sanctuary for the bent knee is too large an item for our building budgets.

Our young liturgete wonders for a moment whether he is the lone man out of tune. But then he recalls that father Voetius argued passionately against the *novelty* of prayer without kneeling. He remembers that Abraham Kuyper devoted several chapters to plead for the respected custom of kneeling during prayer. He even remembers that his revered professor, Dr. Volbeda, insisted that kneeling is the most fitting posture for congregational prayers. No, he is not novel. He is a Reformed traditionalist.

* * *

NEXT, he considers the reading of God's Law. He knows that the Law has two functions for us: it teaches us our sin, leading us to repentance, and it serves as our guide for grateful lives. But he also knows that the Law can have only one function at a time in the liturgy. Either it is used in a service of reconciliation to lead us to confession or it is used as a guide for living. One or the other it should be. Unless its function is defined, the liturgical experience of the people will be confused. One worshiper will be doing one thing, another worshiper will be doing something else, making for liturgical chaos. Furthermore, with the reading of the Law an integral part of the reformed liturgy, its function ought to be the same in all the churches.

It happens to be the conviction of our novice liturgete that the Law is read in worship in order to provide stimulus and occasion for the confession of sin and the assurance of forgiveness. The confession is ordinarily sung by the congregation. But what does he see on the printed form? The fourth verse of Psalter No. 255:

The Lord's command, which I have loved,
Shall still new joy impart;
With reverence I will hear Thy laws
And keep them in my heart.

This is not a confession. It is a joyful acceptance of the Law as the way of godly living. What comes of the confession? It does not take place at this point. Then, surely, the assurance of pardon is out of place also. He recalls that in his church back home, another kind of hymn was sung in response to the Law:

My guilt, my shame, I all confess,
I have no hope nor plea
But Jesus' blood and righteousness,
Be merciful to me.

This was confession, sung as the congregation waited to hear the divine words of assurance: "If we confess our sins. . . ." The responses were quite different. Each implies a specific use of the Law in liturgy. The fact that both are done in our churches suggests that the liturgical use of the Law is not defined among us. It cannot be two things at once in the liturgy. If our liturgy is to have clear sense at all points, or if the people are to have a common experience in worship, the reading of the Law at a particular time must have one clear purpose. All this flits through the mind of our young minister as he contemplates his coming task.

* * *

HE proceeds a bit further. The service of offering strikes his attention. He notes also that there is to be a "special offering during the singing of the last hymn." The "regular" offering is a liturgical act. The people of God serve the Lord by offering their tithes and gifts. This is done in appropriate form. Before the offering, the deacons take their places ceremonially before the pulpit. The minister offers a dedicatory prayer. All this is done to make the offering a religious act of worship. But what of the "special" offering? Here the deacons "get" the money as efficiently as they do in the first offering. The result is the same materially. But the offering plays no part in the worship. There is no dedicatory prayer; the offering is given no liturgical form. It is merely imposed, as an intrusion upon another act of worship. It is "slipped in" during the singing of praise. But, thinks the somewhat confused novice, if the "regular" offering is a meaningful liturgical act, why is not the "special" offering. Is the one a true *offering*, the other a mechanically appended *collection?* He knows in his heart that everything done in the church's worship of God is liturgical and that everything therefore ought to be given a liturgical form. The offering, be it "regular" or "special," is worship. It ought to be given worshipful form.

* * *

NOW his eye leaps to the concluding portion of the service, the benediction. He sees himself raising his

arms (He knows not quite why he raises them) in solemn ceremony as he speaks God's words of peace to the people. That will be the climax, the conclusion. The people will leave the house of God with the assurance that their Lord is with them: the grace, mercy, and love of the Triune God is assured them. But do they really? Not according to the form. For they evidently do not take the benediction earnestly. For, hard on the pronouncement, follows a prayer. Sung indeed, but it is prayer nonetheless. What is the prayer? "May the grace of Christ our Saviour, and the Father's boundless love, with the Holy Spirit's favour, rest upon us from above." And that is the climax. A prayer, liturgically offered, but liturgically unanswered. The people leave with a sigh, a hope and a desire, but not with assurance. Thus they are sent away. The benediction is rendered liturgically meaningless.

The troubled liturgete knows that this does not make void the promise. Nor does it change God's intention of making it good. But it surely makes the benediction look sickly in the liturgy. Again, our doubtful young minister consults a trusted elder. He is told: the prayer was set *after* the benediction to give the minister time to get to the rear door for the post-liturgical handshake. The sense of the liturgy at this point is changed to nonsense. But what is the difference? The minister must get to the door. A handshake and a smile say more than the benediction of God. It does not really, but a visitor from Mars would surely think so.

* * *

THE thrill of anticipation in the heart of our young liturgete is not dimmed. He knows that he will be leading the people of God in worship. He knows that nothing in all the world is more wonderful than this. But he keeps these problems in his heart. One day, he resolves, he will discuss them with men more wise and more experienced than he.

Daane on Van Til

by S. J. Ridderbos*

IT is with some hesitation that I accept the kind invitation of the editors to write a review of Dr. Daane's book on Dr. Van Til's conception of common grace. This hesitation does not arise from the fact that *A Theology of Grace* was written by one of the editors of *The Reformed Journal* and that therefore I might feel myself limited in my movements. It is, of course, always a somewhat precarious undertaking to express an opinion about one's host in the home of the host. But I would imagine that Dr. Daane would rather hear a forthright criticism about himself in his own home than to be the subject of gossip over the teacups.

My hesitation to undertake a review of this book is therefore occasioned by quite another consideration. I feel conscious of the difficulty attendant upon entering on a discussion taking place in another continent. It is so easy to misunderstand the backgrounds of the discussion, and to be less than fully informed about the most recent developments in the debate. My map shows me, it is true, that Los Angeles, the home of Dr. Daane, does not lie exactly next door to the seminary where Dr. Van Til teaches. But, in any case, neither of the two authors concerned is bothered by an intervening ocean (as is the case with the undersigned) which may easily wash away some theological niceties. I hope, therefore, that it will not be held against me if I should say some things in this review which are no longer to the point in America. All this notwithstanding, I do not approach my task without cheerfulness. In the final analysis, Dr. Daane and Dr. Van Til are equally dear to me. And it may not be without advantage when an "outsider" contributes a thought or two in an "existential" discussion such as we are here concerned with.

* * *

TO proceed to the subject now without further delay, I trust that Dr. Daane will not take it ill of me when I state that his book has made a prejudiced impression upon me. According to the sub-title, it is his intention to inquire into and to evaluate Dr. Van Til's conception of common grace. His criticism, however, begins almost from the very first page, and that in such a hefty manner, that as Hollander one is inclined to ask himself whether "inquiry" should not be translated by "inquisition."

In order to limit my remarks I shall not enter upon what the author observes in his introduction concerning Van Til's use of quotation marks in connection with the term "common grace," and about his use of the word "virtually." More important is the attention which he gives to Van Til's declaration with reference to the deliverance of the Synod of Kalamazoo, "For better or for worse, Synod meant to teach that God has a certain attitude of favor to all men as men." According to Danne, the emphasis in this sentence falls on the words "God's favor to all men *as men*," and that this, in view of Van Til, suggests that "men can be regarded under some other category than the category of men." Later this becomes one of the basic theses of Daane's book, when he asserts that Van Til denies the existence of common grace precisely with respect to "men *as men*."

It seems to me, however, that Daane has wrongly interpreted the sentence in question. In the passage concerned the question is: What did synod mean when it expressed the opinion that God is favorably disposed to all his creatures in general? According to Zwier this means a certain favorable disposition to the non-elect. Schilder then raises the objection that "creatures in general" does not mean the same as "men in general." With Zwier, Van Til is of the opinion that this objection is not warranted, and then follows the sentence, "For better or for worse. . . ." According to the sense of the argument the distinction between "creatures in general" and "men in general" is the subject of discussion here, and it seems to me to be a wholly forced interpretation to ask in connection with this sentence, as Daane does, under what other category than "men as men" Van Til wants to view people.

A similarly forced impression is conveyed by the second chapter in Daane's

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book about "The Nature of the Common Grace Problem." The point of departure here is Van Til's declaration that the common grace problem is concerned with this question: "What do entities which will one day be wholly different from one another have in common before that final stage of separation is reached?" (p. 68). Daane treats this sentence as a formal definition of the common grace problem, he draws all manner of conclusions from it, and devotes a whole chapter to the subject. Apart from the question whether Van Til's words are happily chosen, and whether Daane's conclusions are justified or not, it seems unfair to me to freight a sentence made in passing, and in another connection, so heavily, and to hang so much upon it.

As I have said before, all this makes a prejudiced impression on an unprejudiced reader. It is to be psychologically explained in this way, I believe: Dr. Daane initially greeted the appearance of Dr. Van Til's book with a certain appreciation (pp. 7, 8), but as a result of closer study he thought to discover that Van Til in actuality denies common grace and, therefore, implicitly rejects the three points of Kalamazoo. He now considers it his task to awaken the Christian Reformed Church out of her uncritical attitude to Van Til (pp. 8, 16). As so frequently happens in such cases, one becomes unnecessarily sharp, one looks for hidden meanings, everywhere, but one does not persuade another who has not arrived at the same negative conclusions with respect to Van Til, because one proves too much.

DAANE'S book ought really, therefore, to be read backward. That is to say, when one accepts Daane's personal conclusion (Van Til *de facto* denies common grace) one will also regard as suspect expressions of Van Til that are in themselves innocent. One will then also be able to agree more readily with interpretations that Daane makes which convey the impression of being forced.

Daane develops the major thesis about as follows: Common grace extends, according to Van Til, to "mankind as a generality," and not to the concrete individual. This "mankind as a generality" exists and also does not exist. It exists insofar as it is still in a state of "non-existence," and common grace as *earlier* grace applies to this "non-existence." In the existential dialectic of Van Til "non-existence" is something real (*cf.* pp. 61, 96, 151, 158, 159), but Daane takes issue with this because "nothing real can both exist and not exist" (p. 36). The conclusion is simple: a common grace shown to be something that is not real is unreal and therefore does not exist (pp. 48, 61, 62).

For his thesis that Van Til describes "mankind as a generality" in terms of 1. existence and 2. non-existence (p. 36). Daane appeals to these words of Van Til: "If we make the earlier our point of departure for the later, we begin with something that believers and unbelievers have in common. That is to say, they have something in common because they do not yet exist. Yet they do exist. They exist in Adam as their common representative."

My first observation is that Van Til does not, as Daane holds, speak here about "mankind as a generality," but about "believers and unbelievers," that is, concrete, real persons. When Van Til says of them that "they do not yet exist" and "they do exist," then I do not read in this an existential dialectic, but rather understand this to be his intended meaning: Believers and unbelievers do not yet exist at the time of Adam, as concrete individuals but they exist in this sense, that Adam is their common representative. This is no more than a Reformed way of thinking and speaking and one asks why this must all be related to modern existentialism.

Daane continues on his way and detects further mischief when Van Til characterizes common grace as "*earlier* grace." This "earlier" is, according to Daane, not an earlier stage in created time, but means earlier than creation, earlier than existence (pp. 42, 90). He also considers it a shortcoming on my part that in my brochure, *Rondom Het Gemene Gratie Probleem*, I consider this "earlier" of Van Til to have reference to time and not to existence.

Fortunately, Daane himself admits that this interpretation is the more obvious one because, in his opinion, Van Til nowhere plainly answers the question "Earlier *than what?*" (p. 113). But should this not have warned Daane not to take refuge in an unusual interpretation in such an unequivocal manner? Added to this is the consideration that Van Til himself (as Daane also admits) in connection with this "earlier" speaks in so many plain words about the categories of time and history (*cf.* p. 83 of his book *Common Grace*). Daane finds this confusing because Van Til does not actually mean history, but existence. I ask myself, however, why Van Til did not say this and whether the cause of this "confusion" cannot lie in a wrong interpretation of Daane.

Apart from this, Daane should not in his own thinking, in my opinion, have made such a sharp antithesis between time and existence. The process from non-existence to existence is for Van Til, according to Daane, a process of coming to consciousness (pp. 42-44), and I ask whether this process does not require chronological time, history?

Daane is of the opinion, however, that he can easily and convincingly demonstrate that the "earlier" of Van Til does not refer to ordinary, chronological time, because, "*It cannot be said about ordinary time that it is its nature to be earlier but not later.*" Therefore the quality of *earlier* which Van Til ascribes to all common grace is not a "temporal quality" (p. 113).

I do not understand this "easy and convincing" argument. Even if it belonged to the nature of time to be earlier as well as later, then that would still not be to the point here, because the question is whether common grace *which becomes manifest in time*, may be qualified as earlier. Of course there are earlier and later points of time and, except for beginning and end, the same point can be called earlier as well as later. But then it is always earlier or later in relationship to another point *in that same time*, and when Van Til calls common grace earlier grace, he means: earlier than the human reaction to this grace. Van Til speaks of various temporal stages in common grace (*cf.* p. 83 of his book) and therefore there is also room in his thought to call a certain stage of common grace later than another stage. If nevertheless, he prefers the qualification "earlier" then this is, in my opinion, because he always places common grace in relation to the human reaction to it, and then there is no reason to seek, as Daane does, an explanation that goes contrary to Van Til's own words.

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I could continue in this way, but I fear I would then be asking too much

of the hospitality that has been extended me. My criticism, moreover, continually comes down to the same thing: Daane casts himself repeatedly upon a single sentence of Van Til, interprets such an isolated passage wrongly in many instances, in my opinion, and then arrives (often in an original manner) at his little convincing vision on the whole of Van Til's thought.

In giving expression to these thoughts I do not mean to suggest that there is no room for criticism of Van Til. My brochure shows that I am by no means in agreement with Van Til on all points. But I do not believe that criticism of Van Til must be expressed in the manner in which Daane does it. When Van Til is pictured by him as a rationalistic existentialist, then Karl Barth will perhaps think of the boomerang, and then I remember that I once heard someone say about a like kind of criticism, "In this way we can all reduce each other to Nebuchadnezzar."

We all have an old man. Nebuchadnezzar is not yet dead. Undoubtedly it will be possible to discover also in the thinking of Dr. Van Til rationalistic and existentialistic traits. But then more convincing arguments will have to be adduced to establish this than Daane uses. And then it must not be done in this self-conscious manner, as though only another possesses an old man, as in the manner of the first page of his book, "The denial of common grace, *in distinction from its affirmation*, has been grounded in philosophical patterns of thought" (my italics).

In the final analysis, only Van Til himself can say whether he feels that he has been justly dealt with (perhaps this will already have been done when this review is published). Personally, I detect in this criticism the same spirit with which I am only too well acquainted in The Netherlands: drawing consequences for another, and driving him into a position where he does not wish to stand. We have in The Netherlands experienced the fatal consequences of this manner of living with one another. I hope that our American friends will not allow the lessons of this little edifying example to be lost upon them. And I am grateful that I might say this in the home of my host.

As Sons of Olivianus — II

by LEONARD VERDUIN

In the first article of this series we saw that Caspar Olivianus, of Heidelberg Catechism fame, was led, late in his life, to divest himself of prevailing notions concerning the Anabaptists and to go over to a more lenient view of them. It is a distinct pleasure to note at this time that there was at least one other Reformed leader who kept his head as to the Anabaptists, never lent his support to their vilification, always had a sane and charitable view of them. He was Adrian van Haemstede, one of the ministers of the Refugee Churches in England, the churches to which we owe to a large extent the liturgical forms in use among us.

When Queen Elizabeth, prodded on by Protestant clergymen, issued an Edict ordering all Anabaptists out of her realm within twenty days, this Adrian van Haemstede published a tract in which he disapproved of such measures against such people. In his argument he called the Anabaptists "weaker brethren in Christ." He also said that when they died at the stake they were true martyrs who were giving their lives for the cause of Christ.[1]

There was in the Refugee Churches at this time a minister named des Gallars. He was fresh from Geneva and was one of the fifteen who had, upon Calvin's request for endorsements, put their names to the defence in which the burning of Servetus was argued right and proper. (There were at least a few in Geneva who refused to sign). Des Gallars called van Haemstede a "Castellionist" because of the latter's friendly gesture to the Anabaptists. (The word "Castellionist" was a label for all who argued against the philosophy that led to the Servetus slaying).

Although van Haemstede had lots of supporters in the matter locally the outcome was, as might have been anticipated, that he was deposed and made to leave England.

I propose a posthumous "hand" for the freckle-faced Adrian. And I do so with rather good confidence that my proposal will not set the wheels of deposition in motion. Happily the world has changed a bit.

* * *

But, we must on with the job. We wish in our present article to take a good look at the central feature of Anabaptism, the thing that gave it its name, its repudiation of Infant Baptism, its antipedobaptism. There are legends to dispel, records to look at, traditional views to be tailored. In this matter also the sons of Olivianus must follow his precedent.

One of the legends that will have to go is that the Anabaptists repudiated Infant Baptism because of a less-than-Christian assessment of nature. It has been said, and repeated uncritically times without number, that because of an alleged vilification of the order of nature the Anabaptists had to reject infant baptism, relying as it does on the fact of parenthood which is not by grace but by nature.[2] We have no desire to deny that among some who were covered by the rather nondescript term of "Anabaptist" there is evident a less-than-Christian assessment of nature, a sort of *Verneinung* of all that is not specifically redemptional; but it does not appear that this trait was directly the cause of the Anabaptists' antipedobaptism.

One also hears it said that the Anabaptist rejection of infant baptism was born of a synergistic theology; the Anabaptists bore down so heavily (so goes the story) on the need for conscious human involvement in the experience of salvation that child-life, by virtue of its nonage incapable of conscious involvement, was automatically rendered inaccessible to redeeming grace. Again we do not desire to deny that there is a tendency toward synergism in Anabaptist theology (if indeed it is possible to speak of a specific Anabaptist theology); but we feel that it was not this tendency that led to the repudiation of infant baptism. It is more proper to say that arguments drawn from synergism came to the assistance of a repudiation already embraced.

The plain fact is that Anabaptists went far, very far, in asserting that child-life is wholly accessible to God's

redeeming grace. Menno Simons, for instance, sounds very much like one of the fathers of Dordt at this point. Wrote he of the children of believing parents: "Therefore we truly believe that they are in a state of grace, are well-pleasing to God, are cleansed, holy, heirs of God and of eternal life. Yes, it is because of these promises that all true believers in Christ rejoice and comfort themselves with a complete confidence of the salvation of their children." These sentiments occur again and again in the man's writings — so much so that one is prompted to ask why, if all this can be said of the children of believers, should there be any objection to giving them the sign and seal of this grace? Why then was Menno such a vehement antipedobaptist?

The very need to ask that question indicates that we have not as yet laid our finger on the nerve of the matter, have not as yet located the primeval reason for the Anabaptists' antipedobaptism. And this may mean that we had better take another look at the sources.

When he was on trial before the council of his city Felix Manz said darkly, but very significantly: "More is involved in baptism, things one had better not dwell on just now."[3] And it is highly pertinent to note that the prosecution saw through the things purposely left unsaid by Manz; for it came back without a moment's hesitation with "he will at the end be overthrowing the civil order."[4] If I mistake not I hear overtones in this trial, overtones of a decidedly socio-political quality. And, with the detection of these overtones we have come into possession of the key to an understanding of the prime reason for the Anabaptists' antipedobaptism. And when the doors unlocked by this key are open we will be compelled to do, also in regard to this facet of Anabaptism, what Olivianus did in his day when he came face to face with the facts.

* * *

It will be recalled that Pilgram Marpeck, one of the finest of the early Anabaptists, asserted of infant baptism as he stood before his judges: "By it you coerce people to enter the kingdom of God, a matter in which coercion has no legitimate place." He felt that infant baptism as practiced in his times was a flagrant violation of the voluntarism which he considered an essential feature of the genuine Gospel.[5] It served, as Marpeck saw it, as a primary device for erecting and maintaining in the name of Christ, that hateful medieval monstrosity of a "christian" monolithic Church-state employing all the techniques of coercion to which a monolithic society must inevitably turn. It was a part of the Anabaptist vision that this octopus which had too long already strangled to death every genuinely evangelical movement was a thing "of which it will be impossible to get rid unless infant baptism be discontinued,"[6] as this same man Manz put it.

Because of the socio-political implications of the repudiation of infant baptism the princes of those days, lay as well as ecclesiastical, at once marked every Anabaptist for destruction. All hell was let loose against them, so that, had it not been for a Kind Providence the very memory of them would have been wiped from the earth in torture techniques not surpassed for cruelty even in our cruel times. May the knowledge that not only Catholic agitators but Protestant as well called for a bloody purge divest us of some of the complacency that at times besets us!

To understand the why of this ferocity one must recall that the medieval mind was committed, with a commitment that had a religious dimension, to the idea that if men are to get along on the marketplace *they must first have agreed at the altar;* it was sure without falter that no society can hang together unless it be bound together with the cement of a common religious persuasion. Is it wonder that men so committed were horrified at the sight of folk who by their own confession had embraced a religious conviction not shared by the rest? On the medieval premise he is by definition an intolerable seditionist who sponsors a religious brotherhood not by definition coextensive with the political entity of which its adherents are a part.

The Anabaptists had come to realize that the New Testament knows no church save a separated church — in this they were dead right, and, when almost everyone else was wrong. And the Anabaptists were of the opinion that infant baptism as practiced in the omnibus church that had come down from the Middle Ages was one of the chiefest of obstacles in the way of a realization of a Church such as the New Testament requires — in this also they were right. The contemporaries of the Anabaptists, Catholic and Protestant alike, were sure that he deserves the hangman's noose who tries for a church that is not only not *of* the omnibus church but is openly *critical of it* — in this these contemporaries were wrong. At least so it seems to us who have thanked God for a pluralistic society. And it is these prayers in large part that cause us to say that we wish to come clear of the action taken against the Anabaptist pioneers. Not to say it would imply that we pray hypocritically.

* * *

Although the Anabaptists did indeed do pioneer service toward a Church by wholly voluntary association, and, for a baptism that does not do violence to the idea of a Church not by definition coextensive with the society in which it lies, it is not true that the battle began with them. The idea was already old, as old, in fact, as was the idea of an omnibus church. The socio-political value of infant baptism was wholly apparent to that great forger of the omnibus church, Constantine the Great; as was the conviction that he who challenges the omnibus church by establishing a "Sunderkirche" with its corollary of believers' baptism is an intolerable seditionist. A penal Code as early as that of Justinian already provided that "if any man is apprehended rebaptizing some one, he shall be considered equal to him who commits a capital crime . . . and shall undergo capital punishment."[7] Medieval empire builders saw the socio-political value of a baptism for all; Charlemagne, for example, decreed that if any man refused baptism he should be put to death. And the agents of the equally monolith-minded church were only too ready to play hand in glove with the empire builders; Amandus, for instance, who was sent to Flanders to force the world there into the monolithic pattern, asked at once of the King, Dagobert II, for legislation providing that "if any one is unwilling of his own volition to have himself regenerated by the washing of baptism he shall, coerced by the King, be washed in the sacred bath."[8] He got his legislation too. Nor did it lack "heretical" groups all through the centuries of the omnibus church who rejected *this* ba

tism. A single instance must suffice in this connection. A manuscript of the 14th Century and preserved at Strassburg speaks of Waldensians who "have themselves rebaptized by their own priests." These people took seriously the essentially minimal Christian tenet that Faith, in the language of St. Paul, is "not everyman's" (Cf. 2 Thess. 2:3); and they were convinced that any "christening" to which all were subjected was basically a denial of this tenet. The Anabaptists never tired of asking their opponents what Faith may be "seeing that, as Paul says, it is not everyman's." And I can well understand that they derived a certain amount of satisfaction when they saw them squirming under that question.[9]

* * *

We are in position now to understand why the Swiss Reformers and the Anabaptists parted company. The former were not ready to break with medievalism, its omnibus church, and that institution that made the whole situation possible, i.e., infant baptism; the latter had repudiated the medieval pattern, agitated for a believers' church, and were minded to insist upon believers' baptism — which in their situation implied the rejection of infant baptism.

We spoke of "parting company" deliberately. In the earliest days the two camps were very close to each other. When Stumpf, the Anabaptist, came to speak to Zwingli and Leo Jud to try to gain these men for the idea of a believers' church there were as yet no tensions. When Stumpf, according to Zwingli's own words, "belabored them with the ideal of bringing into being a separated people and church consisting of a Christian-like people who lived unoffensive lives, and, adhered to the Gospel" (a program too drastic for Zwingli and Jud) they nevertheless "turned him down in a wholly amiable and friendly fashion."[10]

So also when Conrad Grebel and a colleague tried to enlist Sebastian Hofmeister of Schaffhausen for the idea of a believers' church they met with a firm but as yet friendly rebuff. The official record says that when Hofmeister "refused to go along with the idea then Grebel began to urge that the 'bapsttum' could be laid low with nothing so well as with the institution of infant baptism."[11]

In an incredibly short time this erstwhile friendship evaporated; and then we see Zwingli and his faction clamoring for the blood of the Anabaptists. This radical change in Zwingli and his associates coincides with their decision to espouse, now on a Protestant level, medieval monolithicism and its idea of an omnibus church!

A similar development (The present writer would call it a deterioration) also took place in the soul of Luther. He too was sympathetic in his earlier days toward the clamor for a reformation that would give back to the world a believers' church and rid it of the omnibus "synagog of Satan." Luther was too much under the spell of the New Testament not to feel that there was a certain rightness about this vision. In 1523, for instance, he declared that if the presence of evident faith were made a prerequisite for access to the Lord's Supper it would become apparent that few, very few, were Christian. He even granted that such exposure would be a good thing "which I like, namely, that we would be able to bring together in a certain place apart those who truly (or rightly, L.V.) believe. I would have done it long ago . . ." You ask why then didn't he go ahead with what he too knew to be the Biblical requirement? The answer is that Luther was not quite ready for so radical a step. It was too fraught with socio-political implications. That is why he added: "But conditions have not allowed it as yet."[12]

A few years later (significantly enough a few weeks after an Anabaptist had tried to win Luther for the idea of a believers' Church to take the place of the omnibus church) Luther wrote that the administration of the Sacrament as it was being conducted, the elements extended to believer and unbeliever alike, was "not much different from . . . chucking it down the gullet of a sow";[13] and he suggests the indicated remedy for a situation as unworthy as this: "those who seriously want to be Christians and desire to confess the Gospel by word and deed, these ought to inscribe their names, and should assemble by themselves apart in a given place for prayer, Scripture reading, baptism, reception of the Sacrament, and other Christian activities." And again we ask, what's to hinder you from doing what you yourself say ought to be done? The answer again is that Luther shrank back from the radicalness of the remedy proposed by the Anabaptists. He added, as if to defend himself: "But I am unable at the present time to organize such a church or congregation; for, I don't have the people for it as yet . . . . If however the time comes that I am driven to it, so that duty will not allow me to leave it undone, then I will be quite ready to do my part."[14]

In the meantime the Anabaptists, not quite so sensitive to arguments based on expediency, went out and did the thing Luther said couldn't be done; and, found the people Luther said were not to be found, found them in quantity. And the degree of their success may have had something to do with Luther's vehemence toward the Anabaptists a little later.

Happily we have the report of Luther's visitor. It throws further light upon a situation already clear enough. Caspar Schwenkfeld (it was none other) tells us of his long interview with Luther "I talked at length with him concerning the church of the future, and how that this was the only way to effect a separation of the true Christians from the false, and, that apart from this plan the situation was hopeless." And what did Luther say to this line of talk with such a ring of righteousness in it? "I haven't had much experience as yet with the church of the future, but I can say that I think that I shall make a list of the names of those who are Christians, plan to have their manner of life examined, and I intend to preach for these in the monastery chapel, and there will be a chaplain to address the rest in the church!"[15] If ever there was a man who tried to eat his cake and have it this is he. A Church of believers, yes; but not at the cost of the omnibus church! Plainly Luther had found the earnestness of his visitor so impressive that he tried to devise a plan whereby he could in obedience to the Gospel which he too respected, raise up a believers' church; but his awareness of the radicalness of this break with the past made him straddle the issue. And we read further that when Schwenkfeld belabored Luther with such texts as 2 Peter 2:13 ("spots are they and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you") and asked him pointblank what "believing with singleness of heart and with a fervent spirit" might mean, then Luther put his tormentor off with "Yes, Caspar dear, true Christians are not too common as yet; I'd like to see two of them together; don't know where I would find so much as one." Schwenkfeld concludes his report with a doleful "*Dabei bliebs*" (that's as far as we got).

Sons of Olivianus — Continued

Happily the Anabaptists did not let the matter rest there. Of course the time for which Luther waited was long in coming; it was especially tardy in his beloved Germany. But if it came nevertheless it came largely because of the men who not only saw the gleam but were prepared to follow it — I speak of the Anabaptists.

* * *

IT will come as a surprise to some, although there is really nothing surprising about it, that in those early days of the Reformation, that is, in the days when the die had not as yet been cast in favor of a repetition of monolithicism and its corollary, the omnibus church, there may be detected in the Reformers a clearly traceable indifference toward infant baptism. As long as they toyed with the idea of a believers' church in the place of the omnibus church they were not minded to make an issue of infant baptism.

Zwingli, for instance, when he had listened to a sermon by Grebel (at that time still enjoying Zwingli's favor) in which this "father of Anabaptism," as he has been called, pleaded with all his gift of eloquence for the organization of a believers' Church, one not by definition coextensive with 'the people,' and pointed out that this ideal could not be reached so long as the omnibus church was in vogue, then Zwingli asserted "nothing displeases me quite so much as that I am obliged at the present time to baptize children; for I know it to be improper." And if we ask, as we did a bit ago in regard to Luther, why then do you not walk in the way you have just called the right way? the answer is the same, only a little worse: "If however I discontinue it then I fear the loss of my prebend."[16] One must not lose sight of the fact that to stake your all upon the organization of a believers' church implied in that society a tremendous financial hazard, one that Zwingli was not ready to face as Grebel was, once the call of duty was plain.

It was in these early days that Zwingli wrote: "If one should want to baptize in accordance with Christ's institution then he ought to wait until the man has grown up." May we ask the custumary question once more? Zwingli gives answer in these words, "but because of offences to our fellowmen it is needful to practice infant baptism."[17]

Similarly Zwingli wrote to Hans Hager, "If one should want to baptize in keeping with Christ's command then he should not baptize a person until he has reached the age of understanding." And if once more we ask what detains Zwingli from doing what Christ has commanded?, this time Zwingli makes good his escape with these words: "Because of offences given to the world I avoid reference to it so that I do not preach it. It is better forsooth that I do not preach it until the world is ready for it.[18] Fortunately there were brave men in Zwingli's proximity who did not consider this a valid reason for shying away from the path of duty — the time for which Zwingli was waiting would in all likelihood never have come if it had not been for these brave, these braver, men.

The Reformation was not yet ten years old when a sound of deep disappointment issued from those areas that had hoped the Reformers would take up the ancient grievance against the omnibus church, a disappointment that came with the discovery that the Reformers were not going to achieve any radical break with medievalism, were not establishing a believers' church. Already in 1525 reports came from the Zwickau area that "with the common people and also with learned folk Doctor Martin is fast losing ground." The same disappointment is reflected in the words of the Anabaptist Jorg Nordlinger, who was banished for saying it: "Bucer has for some years now preached very correctly and properly of the Sacrament; but of late he has gone back on it and now preaches a different Sacrament." Melchior Rinck, another influential Anabaptist, expressed his disillusionment by saying: "Although Luther was at first activated by the Spirit of God, he has of late become a devil and an Antichrist." It was in this bitterness of heart, among men who thought that the dawn was there and then had to discover that it was still to be night, that Anabaptism was born, Anabaptism with its unambiguous repudiation of the omnibus church and of its corollary in those days, that is, infant Baptism.

P.S. It should not be necessary to add that in a day and a land such as ours, in which the omnibus church has disappeared without a trace, the arguments of the Anabaptists against infant baptism have become obsolete; and, that in a society where all churches are by voluntary association infant baptism can be given a satisfactory validation. L. V.

Notes

1. Van Haemstede also said that the essentially Docetic Christology advanced by some Anabaptists (There were large areas of Anabaptist thought where this idea, propagated by Melchoir Hofmann was never accepted) concerned the *circumstantia* of the incarnation rather than the incarnation as such. In this Van Haemstede was, of course, vulnerable.

2. The latest repetition of this legend that has come to our attention occurs in Dr. Berkouwer's monumental work on The Sacraments. Writes this Reformed thinker of the Anabaptists and their repudiation of infant baptism: "in their criticism they always took their point of departure in a representation in which nature and grace were set in opposition to each other. They could not believe, neither in their Christology nor in their conception of the Covenant, that 'that which is by nature' can have a place in the Covenant, seeing that by this device the 'spiritual quality' of the Covenant was, as they saw it, placed in jeopardy." (P. 230, translation mine). In the humble opinion of the present writer Dr. Berkouwer brushed aside all too impatiently on p. 217, note 13, Karl Barth's delineation of the feverish defence of pedobaptism in the age of the Reformation; for Barth's representation is essentially correct on historical grounds.

3. "Es stecke ouch mer hinder dem touf das jetz nit ze offnen syge."

4. "er legge zuoletst die oberkeit nider."

5. We wish to make a point of it that the Anabaptists were *for reasons of principle* against the use of coercive techniques of any kind in matters of the faith. This position is not continuous with arguments based on expediency. These one can also find in the arguments of liberal Catholics, principally in America. No minority is really safe in the presence of an argument from expedience.

6. "dero man in kein weg bas abkomme möchte dan so man den kindertouf abstellte."

7. The first legal action taken against the Anabaptists was simply a reaffirmation of these ancient codes.

8. "si quis se non sponte per baptismi lavacrum regerare voluisset, coactus a rege sacri ablueretur baptismate."

9. Leonhard Schiemer (usually considered an early Anabaptist; it is just as likely that he was a late Waldensian), for instance, told a colleague of his that if he wanted to see the preachers really embarrassed he should ask them for a definition of faith "which, as Paul informs us, is not everyman's"; invariably, said Schiemer, "so erstumen sy."

10. "habe si beid angefochten dass si ein besonder volk und kilchen söttind ufrichten und ein christenlich volk darin han, das da zum allerunschuldigist lebte und ouch der Evangelio biklieb und anhängig wäre, da habind si in allweg Güetlich und früntlich abgewiesen."

11. "als er nit wöllte darzuo verwilligen, hüebe im Grebel an zuo sagen wie dass das bapsttum niendertmit bas möchte nidergelegt werden denn mit dem kindertouf."

12. "wie ich gerne wolt, das man die, so recht gleubten, kund uff ein ort sundern. Ich wolt es wol lengst gerne thon haben . . aber es hat sich nicht wollen leyden."

13. "nicht viel anders . . . denn wenn du es einer Sau in Hals stössest."

14. "die ienigen, so mit ernst Christen wollen seyn und das Euangelion mit hand und munde bekennen, musten mit namen sich eyn zeychen und etwo yn eym hause alleyne sich versamlen zum gebet, zu lesen, zu teuffen, das sacrament zu empfahen, und andere Christliche werck zu üben . . . aber ich kan und mag noch nicht eyne solche gemeyne odder versamlunge orden odder anrichten. Denn ich habe noch nicht leute und personen dazu . . . Kompts aber, das ichs thun mus und dazu gedrungen werde, das ichs aus gutem gewissen nicht lassen kan, so will ich das meyne gerne dazu thun."

15. "de futura ecclesia redet ich viel mit yhm, und, wie dieser weg der einige wär dadurch man die rechte Christen von den falschen sondern möchte, sonst wäre keine Hoffnung. Von der zukünfftigen Kirchen aber hette er noch nichts bey sich erfahren, wiewol er der meinung wäre, dass er wollte ein Register machen für die Christen, wollte lassen auffachtung haben auff ihrem wandel, und gedächte denselbigen im Closter zu predigen, sonst solte ein Cappelan den andern in der Pfarr predigen."

16. Mir ist nüts leider denn dass ich die kinder jetzt muoss toufen, denn ich weiss, dass es nit söllte sin. Soll ichs dann abstellen, so besorge ich ich kömme von der pfround."

17. "wenn man wellte toufen, wie Christus den touf in hette gezetzt, so söllte man erst den menschen toufen wann er zuo sinen tagen käme . . . doch von ärgernuss wegen unsers nächtsten ebenmenschen so muoss man den kindertouf bruchen."

18. "wenn man toufen wellti nach dem gheiss Christi, so söllte man den menschen nit toufen unz er zuo sinen vernunft kämi. . . . aber von der welt ärgernuss wegen lan ichs underwegen, dass ichs nit predigen. Und ist ouch wäger, ich predig es nit unz die welt das erbuwen wirt."

Towards a Christian Culture

by NICHOLAS H. BEVERSLUIS*

IN the main vestibule of the new Eastern Christian High School building there will appear a plaque on which will be inscribed the words: "This institution of learning is dedicated to the development of Christian culture through God-centered education."

This inscription seems to me to lay down straight lines for education. It is positive and affirmative; it succeeds in announcing that Christian education has a program. It makes clear at once that this kind of education is not a sectarian or divisive undertaking and that it is not just a fringe movement on the American scene. It says also that we do not start first of all with a protest against some other kind of education; it makes clear that our aim is not isolation; it reminds us that our school is first of all neither a missionary agency nor a job-training institution.

Rather than any of these or all of them together, we aim to be a school in the best tradition of schools. Christianity is a world and life view, it embraces a conception of the true, the good and the beautiful. Our school is at once an embodiment of that vision and an agent of it.

We are a product of it, but also a means of perpetuating it; we have a view of Christian culture and a commitment to it. These we have received as a heritage from the past and these we hold in trust for the future. Expecting of our teachers that they be liberally educated in the best of Christian and humane letters, we expect further that they will liberally educate their students in the same traditions. Teachers thus committed and students thus occupied could well produce a Christian culture in the life of the Community as well as in the life of the individual.

* * *

WHAT then do we mean by Christian culture? What is it we look for in our students as a result of that Christian education? By Christian culture, I believe, we mean at least the following: the redirection and refinement of mind, of morality and of taste.

For many the term culture means good manners, a pleasant voice, correct speech. A person who possesses these is considered to be a cultured person. Others add such things as appreciation of music, literature and art and say these are surely the mark of a cultured person.

And, of course, this is true. Unless we succeed in developing within our students habits and appreciations such as these we shall fail in our education. Unless we can instill within them a respect for one another and a respect for God's good gifts in music and art and literature, unless we succeed in teaching them to speak and to behave as ladies and gentlemen, we will not accomplish what we can and should accomplish. And so there must be a redirecting and a refinement of the student's outward behavior patterns, of his attitudes, of his appreciations, of his tastes.

* * *

BUT Christian culture goes beyond this. It has to do not only with tastes and attitudes and appreciations. It has to do in a more profound way with moral sensitivity, moral choices, moral habits, moral commitments. Unless the student's redirection and refinement takes place on this level, he may be polished and accomplished on the surface but will be considerably less than Christian inside, and cannot be described as having a Christian culture.

Note that in this connection I do not refer to a kind of legalism or moralistic rules of thumb. I refer to the development of the moral nature below the surface of life but of profound significance for every aspect of life. I refer to that part of the individual which finally is confronted by the holy law of God and before it declares moral bankruptcy. It is here that man pleads for divine grace and for cleansing and having been both forgiven and sanctified, lives forth out of a new moral freedom, the freedom which is in Jesus Christ. The school can and must reach this moral level in the student through every subject in the curriculum. The student must be redirected and thereupon refined with respect to right and wrong, truth and falsehood, beauty and ugliness. He must be taught in each case to see both and, having seen and understood them, to choose for the one and against the other, deliberately and habitually. A liberal education can do this as no other kind can. This development in the student, of a piece with the development of behavior and attitudes and appreciations and tastes, is development in the way of Christian culture.

*Rev. Beversluis is Principal of the Eastern Christian High School and this article is the substance of an address delivered upon the occasion of the dedication of the new High School Building.

Toward a Christian Culture — Continued

AND yet the matter cannot rest here. There must above all be a redirection and refinement of mind. Boys and girls, men and women, are preeminently rational beings created in the image of God. They possess, in addition to their aesthetic and moral qualities, also the quality of mind. That is to say, they have capacity for knowing the truth, for thinking in a system, for seeing the pattern that runs through all of existence.

This faculty within them must be challenged and enlarged by education. The development of it and refinement of it is a most important part of Christian culture. Every man in his own way, sooner or later, is confronted with the question, "Who is God?", "Where do I come from?", "Why am I here?", "What is my destiny?" Students, too, ask this question and, as it happens, when they don't ask it, they must be made to ask it. This has to do with the truth; therefore it has to do with our knowledge of God, the world and our fellow men. And therefore also in a direct way it has to do with theology, the sciences and the humanities.

These subjects are the chief business of schools, and a most important discipline aimed at in the study of these subjects is the enlarging of the student's understanding of truth as a system. In our case, of course, education is concerned with Christian truth. To say this is at once to make clear that what I speak of here is not intellectualism or a kind of dead orthodoxy.

I refer to the development of mind—that is, to the redirection and refinement of the center of man, of the part of him that can and must know the truth. It must be redirected because man by nature pursues falsehood and cherishes ignorance. It must be refined because man by nature is content too soon to rest from his pursuit, and to say: I have the truth. This refinement of mind brings humility and worship; it also roots morality in truth and taste in morality.

* * *

CHRISTIAN culture has to do with these three. God-centered education in the schools is the means for development of each in their order. When the mind is thus formed by Christian education, and morality is thus established and tastes are thus directed, the school may well be regarded to be an agent of Christian culture.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

DEAR SIRS:

. . . . I do enjoy this publication. Especially does it have significance for me in the positions it takes on important contemporary issues. Its strong and courageous stand . . . . is deeply gratifying to me. May God bless its influence on our Church and help to make its members consistent Christians, sensitive to all the implications of our precious heritage.

Sincerely,
Frances Vander Mey
Ann Arbor, Mich.

* * *

DEAR SIRS:

I wish to say that I think your publication is of much benefit in our denomination . . . .

I would like to see more information on the duty and right of a congregation with regard to mission work. I enjoyed the recent article of Rev. Harry Boer on missions very much. From comment on it at the Ministers' Conference last Monday it would seem to have made quite an impression . . .

I enjoy the articles of Professor Vanden Bosch very much. In our rushing age a glimpse into the past is not a common thing.

Sincerely yours,
C. L. Van Zee
Hancock, Minnesota

* * *

GENTLEMEN:

Rev. Harry R. Boer's article "The Christian Reformed Church and the American World" adds another refreshingly different voice to the old and fortunately increasing concern over the unhappy problem of the CRC's relative isolation within the Christian community in America. He asks repeatedly, in different ways, Why are we this way? He provides an answer by saying "We fear the unusual. We have lent sacred sanction to historically risen ecclesiastical and social patterns." But, for this reader, this is not an answer to the question; it is simply a restatement of the problem.

That the problem exists is commonly agreed. Even the Editor of *The Banner* (p. 29, Jan. 7, 1955) says "We wish that all our churches were as friendly to strangers who attend their services as (our) First Denver (church)." But while there is common agreement on the problem, there is not common agreement on the cause; nor has anyone to date come forward with a plausible explanation of the basic cause. When Rev. Boer says "We fear the unusual etc., . . ." he does not tell us "Why." He does not give us a cause for the condition. He simply rephrases a known condition. He does not tell us why "we have lent sacred sanctions to — the patterns."

In our circles we like to say that the cause for all of man's rationalized social actions can be found in his religion; ecclesiastically speaking, can be found in the religious doctrines (formal if you please) he uses as his quick point-of-reference. Shouldn't we then to be consistent, look to the "sacred" doctrines for the cause of these unhappy "patterns"?

Since both Rev. Boer and the Editor of *The Banner* appear deeply concerned with this condition shouldn't both of them be doing some public soul-searching among the doctrines of the Church to locate the cause of the ill rather than simply moaning "we wish" the situation was different? Isn't it more likely that the "sacred" doctrines (or their mis-interpretation by an ecclesiastical body) have produced the pattern rather than (as Boer feels) that the patterns have taken unto themselves "sacred sanction"?

Is it possible that an ecclesiastical perversion of the doctrine of election (and its satellite doctrines) could be the real and basic cause for our admitted failure "to be a genuine expression of the universal Church of Christ"? With this question, I am asking that we continue looking for the cause of the condition deplored in Rev. Boer's article and suggesting a likely fruitful source for locating the cause. The presumption, of course, is that if the cause is known the cure will follow.

Sincerely yours,
Leo Peters
Grand Rapids, Mich.